

HB 5862 – Hearing Testimony

The Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association

Dennis H. Eade, Executive Director

My name is Dennis Eade, and I am executive director of The Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association. We have fourteen chapters located throughout Michigan with over 6000 members and affiliates representing the interests of all fishers in the Great Lakes Basin. We actively pursue the preservation and improvement of the Great Lakes ecosystem and its connecting waterways. We work closely with the MDNR on the Cold Water Resources Steering Committee to undertake river remediation projects to rehabilitate riparian landscapes and propagation habitat. Our members fish these rivers and streams throughout the year in search of the elusive steelhead trout, rainbow, brown and brook trout that thrive in our inland rivers and streams.

The thought that we would consider giving license to a small group of gold prospecting hobbyists to disturb stream beds with sluices, rocker boxes, dredges and suction nozzles in order to claim a miniscule amount of gold from the riffles sheltering fish eggs, bugs, and crustaceans makes no sense. The unintended consequences of allowing this activity alone is economically and ecologically disastrous. We have estimated, (and I will differ to Dr. Burrough's for conformation) that it could cost as much as \$40,000 to fix a riffle damaged by prospecting activity not including remediating the downriver erosion. I am sure you will hear about the efficacy the hobbyists' intent to practice restoring the streambeds, but that is after the damage has been done. We have issues from time to time with our own fishers' not removing the liter they create, so I'm certain hobbyist groups are going to encounter prospectors who don't remove their material piles and recontour stream beds. It is inevitable and it can be prevented by not supporting HB 5862.

If you are a serious gold prospector, you need to go to where glaciology predicts you'll find gold left by the receding glaciers and the most promising areas are not in Michigan. The gold standard for Michigan is the quality of our trout and salmon fisheries which attract over 347,000 out of state fishers to Michigan every year adding to our tourism revenue and second only to the state of Florida in numbers. We have a \$4.2 billion dollar sport fishing industry in Michigan and we are the envy of 47 of the 48 contiguous states. Let's not jeopardize what brings tourism dollars into the state and provides days and weeks of enjoyment to the 1.7 million of us who buy Michigan fishing licenses every year. My colleague, Roger Hinchcliff, is one of those fishers who spends countless days on the water every year.